

Key success factors

- being able to construct an argument
- being able to link points together in a logical sequence
- using appropriate discourse markers to connect, contrast, and balance points

ANALYSING A MODEL TEXT

- a You have been asked to write the following essay:

Text-messaging is an important advance in communication – or is it?

With a partner, discuss three reasons you think text messaging represents an important advance in communication and three reasons why it does not. Order them 1–3 according to their importance.

- b Read the model essay and see if the writer has mentioned some or all of your arguments. Does the writer put her main argument first in both paragraphs?
- c Look at the three introductory paragraphs below and choose which one you think is best for the essay. Compare with a partner, and discuss why you think it is the best, and why the other two are less suitable. Then do the same with the concluding paragraphs.

Introductory paragraphs

- 1 Since the first SMS was sent in 1992, text messaging has become one of the most popular forms of communication, especially among the younger generation, with billions of messages being sent every year. But has this technology really improved interpersonal communication?
- 2 Text messaging clearly has important advantages and disadvantages. In this essay, I am first going to analyse the advantages of SMS technology and then I will outline some important disadvantages before finally drawing my conclusions.
- 3 Can you imagine life without sending and receiving SMSs? Almost certainly not, as this cheap and convenient technology has become such a vital tool for organizing our social lives and communicating instantly with our friends and family. How did we manage before it was invented?

Concluding paragraphs

- 1 In conclusion, text messaging has important advantages and disadvantages, but on the whole, I believe that it has improved our lives in a significant way.
- 2 In my view, text messaging has improved communication considerably and it is highly useful, for example, if you are trying to contact someone in a very noisy place, such as a club, where it would be impossible to hear a phone call. In conclusion, it is a very vital piece of technology.
- 3 To sum up, although text messages are a cheap and useful way of communicating, they have arguably led to young people being less able to express themselves correctly in writing. On balance, I believe that text messaging does not represent an advance in communication.

Text-messaging is an important advance in communication – or is it?



'Just think of it as if you're reading a long text-message.'

Introduction**Arguments in favour**

Being able to send short, written messages via mobile phone has clearly advanced communication in certain respects.

The greatest benefit of texting is that it allows us to communicate instantly with other people wherever they are, but without interrupting them in the way that a phone call would, and allowing them to reply whenever it is convenient for them to do so. In addition, sending a text, for example to arrange where to meet someone, is a quick, concise, and efficient way of communicating, as people normally only include the vital information. Finally, text messaging is a very cheap form of communication, which is a particular advantage for young people or for people who are travelling, when mobile phone conversations can be prohibitively expensive.

Arguments against

On the other hand, however, there are strong arguments to suggest that text messaging has had a negative effect on how we communicate. One downside is that there is a tendency for people to use texts as an excuse to get out of conversations which might be uncomfortable to have either face-to-face or on the phone. Another drawback is that people increasingly text while they are in company, suddenly switching off from a conversation and focusing on their phone screens. However, perhaps the most important and worrying downside of texting is the effect it is having on written communication. Teachers worldwide complain that the idiosyncratic language of text messages, such as abbreviated words and the use of letters and numbers to convey meaning has led to a generation of young people being unable to spell or form correct sentences.

Conclusion

Introductions and conclusions

In an essay it is important that the introduction engages the reader's attention. It should introduce the topic, but should not include the specific points that you are going to mention in the body of the text.

A good introductory paragraph describes the present situation and gives supporting evidence. It should refer to the statement or question you have been asked to discuss. This can often be done in the form of a question to the reader which the subsequent paragraphs should answer. The conclusion should briefly sum up the arguments you have made, and can include your personal opinion. The opinion you express should follow logically from the arguments you have presented.

USEFUL LANGUAGE

- d Complete the missing words. Some (but not all) are in the model essay.

Expressing the main points in an argument

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- 1 The greatest **b** _____ is that _____ texting allows us to communicate instantly with other people.
- 2 **First and most im** _____

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- 3 One **d** _____ of texting is that _____ people use texts as an excuse to get out of conversations.
- 4 Another **dr** _____ to text messaging is that _____

Adding supporting information to a main argument, or introducing other related arguments

- 5 In a _____,
- 6 **What is m** _____,
- 7 **Not o** _____ that, but _____
- 8 **Another point in f** _____ of this technology is that _____

Describing cause and effect

- 9 Text messaging can **r** _____ in / _____ an inability to write correctly.
- 10 Other problems can arise **because of / d** _____ to _____ text messaging.

Weighing up arguments

- 11 **On b** _____, _____ I believe that it does not represent an advance in communication.
- 12 **On the wh** _____,
- 13 **A** _____ in a _____,

PLANNING WHAT TO WRITE

Brainstorm the content

Low-cost airlines have revolutionized travel – but at what price?
The growth of online shopping has greatly improved life for the consumer.

- a Look at the essay titles above, and with a partner choose one of them. Brainstorm the pros and cons of either low-cost airlines or online shopping. Then decide the three main arguments on each side which are relevant to the title.
- b Write an introduction for the essay. Follow this pattern:
- 1 Write an introductory sentence about how low-cost airlines or online shopping affect our lives nowadays.
 - 2 Write a second sentence supporting the first one, or describing the result of it.
 - 3 Ask a question that you intend to answer in the essay.
- c Compare your introduction with a partner. Together, make a final version.

TIPS for writing a discursive essay where you put both sides of an argument

- Brainstorm points for and against and decide which two or three you think are the most important.
- Use a neutral or formal style.
- Write a clear introduction, which engages the reader. You could end with a question you are going to answer.
- Link your ideas together with varied discourse markers and linking phrases, e.g. *due to*, *this can lead to*, etc. because an essay should show the development of a logical argument; it is not just a list of random ideas and opinions.
- Make sure your conclusion is a summary of what you have previously said and refers back to what you were asked to write about. It is important that this is not just a repetition of your arguments. It is a summary of what you believe your arguments have proved.

WRITING

Write the essay in approximately 250 words.

DRAFT your essay in four paragraphs:

- introduction
- arguments in favour of low-cost airlines or online shopping
- arguments against low-cost airlines or online shopping
- conclusion, saying whether you think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages or vice versa

EDIT the essay, cutting any irrelevant information and making sure it is the right length.

CHECK the essay for mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and register.